

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.-4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) ~~The parking meter as defined in claim 1~~ A parking meter, comprising:

i) a microcontroller;

ii) a timer coupled with the microcontroller;

iii) payment acceptance means coupled with the microcontroller for accepting payment for use of an associated parking space, such that the microcontroller initiates the timer for a prepaid parking interval upon receiving a signal from the payment acceptance means;

iv) vehicle detection means coupled with the microcontroller for detecting the presence or absence of a vehicle in the associated parking space;

v) means for identifying a vehicle parked in the associated parking space, comprising an interrogation station coupled with the microcontroller, said interrogation station adapted to direct an interrogation signal, having a maximum range of approximately the length of the associated parking space or less, at the associated parking space in the area of the parking space where the license plate of a parked vehicle is located, receive a reply signal encoded with a vehicle identification code and to decode said signal, the microcontroller initiating the interrogation station to direct said interrogation signal at the associated parking space in the area of the parking space where the license plate of a parked vehicle is located upon determining the existence of a parking violation; and

vi) digital storage means for storing said decoded vehicle identification code;
wherein said vehicle detection means ~~further~~ comprises a digital camera which detects the presence of a vehicle.

6.-12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) ~~The parking meter as defined in claim 1~~ A parking meter, comprising:

i) a microcontroller;

ii) a timer coupled with the microcontroller;

iii) payment acceptance means coupled with the microcontroller for accepting payment for use of an associated parking space, such that the microcontroller initiates the timer for a prepaid parking interval upon receiving a signal from the payment acceptance means;

iv) vehicle detection means coupled with the microcontroller for detecting the presence or absence of a vehicle in the associated parking space;

v) means for identifying a vehicle parked in the associated parking space, comprising an interrogation station coupled with the microcontroller, said interrogation station adapted to direct an interrogation signal, having a maximum range of approximately the length of the associated parking space or less, at the associated parking space in the area of the parking space where the license plate of a parked vehicle is located, receive a reply signal encoded with a vehicle identification code and to decode said signal, the microcontroller initiating the interrogation station to direct said interrogation signal at the associated parking space in the area of the parking space where the license plate of a parked vehicle is located upon determining the existence of a parking violation; and

vi) digital storage means for storing said decoded vehicle identification code;

wherein said vehicle detection means comprises digital camera means coupled with the microcontroller and adapted to be focussed at the associated parking space in the area of the parking space where the ~~license~~ license plate of a parked vehicle is located, the microcontroller initiating the camera to take an image of a vehicle license plate upon determining the existence of a parking violation.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A parking meter, comprising:

- i) a microcontroller;
- ii) a timer coupled with the microcontroller;
- iii) payment acceptance means coupled with the microcontroller for accepting payment for use of an associated parking space, such that the microcontroller initiates the timer for a prepaid parking interval upon receiving a signal from the payment acceptance means;
- iv) vehicle detection means comprising a digital camera coupled with the microcontroller for detecting the presence or absence of a vehicle in the associated parking space; and
- v) means for identifying a vehicle parked in the associated parking space, comprising digital camera means coupled with the microcontroller and adapted to be focussed at the associated parking space in the area of the parking space where the ~~license~~ license plate of a parked vehicle is located, the microcontroller initiating the camera to take an image of a vehicle license plate upon determining the existence of a parking violation.

16. (Canceled)

17. (New) The parking meter of claim 5 further comprising:

- vii) telecommunications means coupled with said microcontroller, the microcontroller initiating a call notifying a remote monitoring station upon determining the existence of a parking violation and communicating said vehicle identification code.

18. (New) The parking meter of claim 13 further comprising:

- vii) telecommunications means coupled with said microcontroller, the microcontroller initiating a call notifying a remote monitoring station upon determining the existence of a parking violation and communicating said vehicle identification code.

19. (New) The parking meter of claim 15 further comprising:

vi) telecommunications means coupled with said microcontroller, the microcontroller initiating a call notifying a remote monitoring station upon determining the existence of a parking violation.

20. (New) The parking meter of claim 15 wherein said microcontroller comprises a microprocessor.

21. (New) The parking meter as defined in claim 5, wherein the microcontroller initiates the timer for a predetermined standby interval upon receiving a signal from the vehicle detection means that a vehicle is present in the associated parking space, wherein said microcontroller is adapted to terminate the timing of the standby interval upon receiving a signal from the payment acceptance means, and said microcontroller initiates the interrogation station to direct an interrogation signal at the associated parking space in the area of the parking space where the license plate of a parked vehicle is located after expiry of said standby interval without receiving a signal from said payment acceptance means that a payment has been made.

22. (New) The parking meter as defined in claim 13, wherein the microcontroller initiates the timer for a predetermined standby interval upon receiving a signal from the vehicle detection means that a vehicle is present in the associated parking space, wherein said microcontroller is adapted to terminate the timing of the standby interval upon receiving a signal from the payment acceptance means, and said microcontroller initiates the interrogation station to direct an interrogation signal at the associated parking space in the area of the parking space where the license plate of a parked vehicle is located after expiry of said standby interval without receiving a signal from said payment acceptance means that a payment has been made.

23. (New) The parking meter as defined in claim 15, wherein the microcontroller initiates the timer for a predetermined standby interval upon receiving a signal from the vehicle detection means that a vehicle is present in the associated parking space, wherein said microcontroller is adapted to terminate the timing of the standby interval upon receiving a signal from the payment acceptance means, and said microcontroller initiates the camera to take an image of the vehicle license plate after expiry of said standby interval without receiving a signal from said payment acceptance means that a payment has been made.

24. (New) The parking meter as defined in claim 19, wherein the microcontroller initiates the timer for a predetermined standby interval upon receiving a signal from the vehicle detection means that a vehicle is present in the associated parking space, the microcontroller is adapted to terminate the timing of the standby interval upon receiving a signal from the payment acceptance means, and the microcontroller initiates a call to said remote monitoring station as to a parking violation after the expiration of the standby interval without receiving a signal from said payment acceptance means that a payment has been made.

25. (New) The parking meter as defined in claim 5, wherein the microcontroller determines the existence of a parking violation upon the vehicle detection means signalling to the microcontroller the presence of a vehicle in the associated parking space after expiry of said prepaid parking interval.

26. (New) The parking meter as defined in claim 13, wherein the microcontroller determines the existence of a parking violation upon the vehicle detection means signalling to the microcontroller the presence of a vehicle in the associated parking space after expiry of said prepaid parking interval.

27. (New) The parking meter as defined in claim 15, wherein the microcontroller determines the existence of a parking violation upon the vehicle detection means

signalling to the microcontroller the presence of a vehicle in the associated parking space after expiry of said prepaid parking interval.